

A Management Plan For Agricultural Subsurface Drainage and Related Problems on the Westside San Joaquin Valley

September 1990



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for
Agricultural Subsurface Drainage
and Related Problems on the Westside
San Joaquin Valley**

Final Report
of the
San Joaquin Valley Drainage Program

September 1990

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Reclamation
Fish and Wildlife Service
Geological Survey

CALIFORNIA RESOURCES AGENCY
Department of Fish and Game
Department of Water Resources

PREFACE

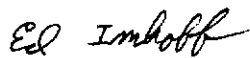
A comprehensive study of agricultural drainage and drainage-related problems on the westside San Joaquin Valley has resulted in the management plan presented in this final report of the Federal-State interagency San Joaquin Valley Drainage Program.

Understandably, some may be disappointed that no single, sure, and lasting solution to the drainage problem has been put forward. Rather, the management plan presented is complex and includes risks that could be costly. Moreover, it may be only the first step in solving the salt accumulation problem. Virtually everyone involved in examination of the drainage problem agrees, however, that there is no single solution and no easy answer to the problem.

But it is also generally agreed that the drainage problem is manageable and that this management logically begins in the valley with a broadly shared effort to reduce the amount of drainage water, to place the remaining water under control, and to contain and isolate toxicants such as selenium. Such actions would largely correct present problems of waterlogging of farmlands and could greatly reduce adverse impacts on fish and wildlife.

The in-valley actions recommended in the plan would also be necessary for any eventual export of salt from the San Joaquin Valley. The recommended actions would provide a regional drainage infrastructure that now exists only in scattered pieces. If the plan proposed here is implemented, a salt export decision need not be made for several decades.

A review of the history of the drainage problem suggests that some of the reasons the problem has grown to nearly 500,000 acres and is adversely affecting the environment include: (1) Continued hopes for a master drain, (2) expectations of a technological breakthrough in drainage water treatment, (3) the need for more information, and (4) a lack of cooperation among parties affected. Viewed as an accumulation of years of piecemeal efforts and neglect, the problem appears overwhelming. It is not. Systematic, shared work begun now can manage the problem and contribute to its eventual solution.



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